In the train, 8 August

Left Cuverville this morning.

Gerard asks me if my patience is not taxed by so many people. (We are twelve at table every day.) —No, but only on condition that I can be "polite" only when I want to be. A few dips into solitude are as essential to me every day as my sleep at night. That is the way I smooth out my ruffled nerves. What joy I felt the other evening at my work, in the small room beside the linen-room, after I had left them all together in the drawing-room! My greatest advantage between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three was that I preferred that kind of pleasure to those of society.

My work is hardly getting ahead at all, and will not progress any better so long as I am not convinced that I am writing a masterpiece.

My Aunt Charles Gide has just been very ill; a very bad heart attack; less painful, however, than the one I saw her have one evening in Paris. Gerard, since he has begun emancipating himself, worries her. One must admit that he was not very reassuring. What a look he had the first evening! Apart from the other children, he was pacing up and down the garden; I was giving him the *indifferent* treatment, but eventually I took pity on him; in the darkness I sought him out on the path where I could see the light of his cigarette.

T[ought to be in Paris,[9]* he said right away. "Yes, Ventura was waiting for me. For the last hour I have been telling myself that I could be with her. . . . Well, too bad! Tomorrow she leaves for America and I shan't be able to see her for six months." A few steps more in silence; then he continues in a more muffled voice:

"This evening, without any doubt, I would have had her/*

"You mean that she was giving up."

**Yes, more than a week ago she had ceased defending herself against me/'

'Then you, for fear of not—being up to it, you

abruptly side-stepped?"

Gerard (taken aback, sheepish and furious, after a pause):

"All right, yes! . . .*

But right now he is sick at having left just as he was sick at staying.

Marcel is not working and will not work. He rushes ravenously toward every distraction; in my study he has already devoured in less than six days the books I had set aside for three months* reading.

Six years more and he will be ripe for that "Catholic discipline** he spoke of in one of his recent letters. That "discipline" reminds me very much of the Red Cross ambulances. If in spite of everything you tried to go ahead on foot instead of getting someone to carry you. . . .